



St. Mary's County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEALTH ALERT:

Local Resident Hospitalized with Meningococcal Disease

LEONARDTOWN, MD (January 23, 2006) -- A St. Mary's County resident, Anthony Tyrone Fenwick, was hospitalized January 19 at St. Mary's Hospital with possible meningococcal disease. As a precaution, St. Mary's County Health Department is contacting individuals who have been in contact with Fenwick and may be at risk for contracting the illness.

Meningococcal disease is spread from person to person by direct close contact with saliva, mucus, or droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person. Contact such as kissing, sharing eating utensils and food, or sharing the same beverage container with an infected person may cause infection. People who have been in close contact with the patient may need preventative treatment with antibiotics.

"The health department is recommending that people who may have been in close contact with Mr. Fenwick contact their doctor or the health department to determine their level of risk and to see if antibiotic treatment is recommended for them," said Nancy Luginbill, RN, director of community health services. "People who have had only casual contact with the patient, do not need preventive treatment. Casual contact includes being in the same room, shaking hands and hugging," Luginbill added.

The health department advises that preventive medication should be administered within 24 hours of exposure if possible. People who cannot be treated within that period, still may benefit from preventive treatment given within 10-14 days after exposure.

(more)

People should call their doctor immediately if they think they may have an infection due to meningococcus. Symptoms to look for include: high fever, nausea and vomiting, severe headache, stiffness and pains in the neck, shoulders, and back, and a skin rash of small, bright, red spots or a larger, reddish/purple "bruise." Symptoms often begin suddenly.

The health department will provide preventive treatment on a walk-in basis at their Leonardtown office during normal hours Monday through Friday. For more information about your risk level, or to receive a fact sheet, call the St. Mary's County Health Department at 301-475-4330.

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